

Training News & Updates

Greetings from the ROH Training Department!

All the tragic events currently happening to the children, such as being traumatized by the earthquake in Asia or captured and trafficked for prostitution, make us increasingly aware of the immensity of the task and the responsibility of and need for the church to join us in reaching out to suffering children and their families in healing ways. I was startled to read that every eighteen days as many people die of HIV/AIDS as the total number who died in the tsunami. The traumatic situations confronting children, unfortunately, will not lessen.

What is a Child Worth?

There are clocks to tell the time of day,
And scales to tell the weight of hay;
But what rule, Sir, would you employ
To tell the worth of a girl or boy?
Measures there are for silver and gold.
By carates the worth of diamonds are told,
But there is no measure in all the earth
To tell what a boy or a girl is worth.
—Author unknown

The training department is seeking to provide training tools to help you in your task. I believe most of you are aware that the first (and core) module of *Offering Healing for Children in Crisis* is now being mailed out to many countries. This book is a “train the trainer” curriculum. If anyone would like more information about this tool, just write and let me know. We are preparing a brochure and information will soon be on the Web.

Last week I received the first lesson of the street children’s module being written by Andy Sexton, Oasis’ International Director for Children at Risk. Andy has worked for decades with street children, so he comes to us well qualified. He is giving one or two full days a week to this writing task. Keep him in your prayers! We are hoping that by the end of June this module will be completed.

I am hoping to spend February and March at the Linkcare center in Fresno, California. I am on Sabbatical until July but I plan to keep my fingers a bit in the inkpot so am grateful for their library and materials. Marj McDermid will join me for a part of this time. Who knows what we will dream up!



A major prayer item is to know God’s future direction for Crisis Care Training International. What is His strategy for multiplying and equipping workers to meet the ever-increasing crisis care situations and needs? We need an intermission cooperation and sharing of resources. We also need to pray for the personnel of God’s choice to assume the role of training director for Rainbows of Hope.

This edition of Barnabas will arrive as—or right after—our ROH personnel have their first international retreat (March 7–17). I trust we can include some of the training reports and highlights from the retreat in the next issue of Barnabas. The retreat will feature a number of teaching seminars, and ROH workers will present their best practices.

May you be encouraged and strengthened by His loving and faithful presence and provisions.

Together, providing hope for the children,

Phyllis Kelbourn

The Emotional Wounds of Sexually Abused Children

-Thirza Schools

This article addresses the issues surrounding general sexual abuse such as happens in the home and commercial sexual exploitation such as prostitution. The children with whom we work will likely have experienced both.

John 10:10 states Satan's plans for the children: to rob, steal, kill and destroy. When children are stolen and destroyed by sexual abuse, the enemy not only robs children of their childhood but also potentially steals from their adulthood, thus weakening the effectiveness of the church. It is part of our job as Christian caregivers to be spoilers of the enemy's plan.

Understanding the children's emotional response to sexual abuse will provide insights into interventions needed for their recovery. The following describes some of these responses.

Anger and hostility

Abused children typically are angry children. They have learned to suppress or control their rage and often express it only in indirect ways through a variety of behavior symptoms. Although they may appear outwardly passive and compliant, most child sexual abuse victims are inwardly seething with anger and hostility. Not only are they angry with the people who failed to protect them from the sexual abuse but also with the perpetrators. We need to confirm a child's right to be angry knowing that, in time, he or she will learn how to deal with the anger and how to forgive.

Fear, concerns for safety

Sexually abused children have had their sense of safety violated at the deepest levels. They need help in identifying their fears and expressing them. For safety to be restored, children need to learn who the "safe" people are along with knowing when and where they can experience safety and protection.

Withdrawal

Children who have been deeply wounded find withdrawal from their painful world a safer option than chancing close relationships.

Guilt, self-hatred and depression

After sexual abuse, nearly all children hate themselves. And children who hate themselves often hate others. They are often self-destructive and may make suicidal attempts. They may also feel intensely guilty. They reason, "If these things happened to me, I

must somehow have deserved or allowed them. Therefore, I am to blame. It happened because I'm bad." We must help children understand that they can never be held responsible for sexual activity with an adult. The child needs to know he or she had a right to expect protection, not abuse, from an adult.

Stigmatization

Stigmatization also marks children who have endured the trauma of sexual abuse. They feel an internal sense of shame and alienation along with being labeled.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem includes an individual's sense of personal worth and an acceptance of who one is. It is expressed through one's behavior. If children don't feel worthy and capable, they feel like failures and expect to do poorly. When children are thought of simply as commodities to be used, they cannot have a sense of self-worth and respect for themselves. In children, self-esteem is tied to family, friends and other important people.

Four components of self-esteem have been identified:

- a sense of one's own identity
- a sense of belonging
- a sense that one's uniqueness is recognized and respected
- a sense of self through the power of self-definition

Inability to trust

Obviously a child who has been sexually abused by someone he or she knew and trusted will have difficulty in developing new trust relationships. The inability to trust is directly linked to the victim's low self-esteem and past experiences of betrayal. The mistrust of abuse victims extends to God. Children need to learn that they can be honest with God regarding how they feel about Him. We should also not be surprised if the children do not respond immediately and openly to our kindness, love and good intentions.

Sexually abused children have learned not to trust themselves, other people or their environment. They

view the world and the people in it as inconsistent and hurtful. Often they have been deeply hurt by those they love. A trusting relationship is possible but it takes time and patience.

Inability to trust can also affect a child's spiritual development. Mistrust and an inability to develop trusting relationships also can lead sexually traumatized children to not always feel safe with authority figures. To the extent that children view God as an authority figure, their mistrust can extend to not trusting God. Children also may transfer to God their feelings about the perpetrators. In some ways they may even view God as an accomplice. Since God knows all, He knew of the abuse. Since God is all-powerful, He could have stopped the abuse.

Loss and betrayal

Loss and betrayal are two elements that surround children who have been sexually exploited. Perhaps the most notable loss is the loss of dignity and a sense of safety. In addition, children may feel the loss of security because people didn't protect them from the trauma. Betrayal, which is essentially a loss of trust, shakes the very foundation of childhood development.

Hopelessness/learned helplessness

Because of the children's situations, they often despair that life can offer them anything better. They lack faith in a meaningful future. Their spiritual questions frequently center around meaning and purpose: "Why did this happen to me?" "What's the point of all this?" Or their questions may reflect more of their anger: "What kind of God would let this happen?"

Powerlessness

Sexually abused children feel a strong sense of powerlessness; they had no control over the abuse nor were they able to stop it. We need to empower children by helping them regain a sense of power and control in their lives. Many children hold on to the powerlessness they experienced when they were traumatized. As a result, they develop significantly impaired self-images.

Children may manifest other behaviors from the trauma. These behaviors include not accepting boundaries, hurting themselves, suffering severe depression, acting in a hostile, destructive manner, showing high suicidal tendencies and desire for excessive emotional attachment. They may exhibit attention-seeking behavior, poor learning ability, short attention and memory span and are vulnerable to addictions, dissociation, attachment disorders and escaping reality through sleep or fantasy.

In spite of their fears and negative experiences, some children do not want to leave prostitution. They see prostitution as a replacement for family love,

acceptance and affection. Others, although offered alternatives, tend to drift back into prostitution voluntarily, as it is something known and does not make demands on them mentally. Change of values also affects their desire to leave. If money has become their highest value, they are more likely to remain.

Demonstrating warmth to a child means
"I accept you where you are."

Sexually abused children have been hurt within a relationship and they also must be healed in relationships. Good relationships include two healing qualities: warmth and genuineness. Demonstrating warmth to a child does not mean you approve of everything you hear or witness. It does, however, mean, "I accept you where you are." Jesus' attitude toward the woman at the well is a good example of acceptance. He respected and treated her as a person of value, without condoning her behavior. Even at a distance, children can detect an insincere person. They not only evaluate words, they also read the sincerity in eye contact, posture and tone of voice.

Perhaps the most common and devastating consequence of child sexual abuse happens when a child feels damaged by his or her experiences. Through the experience of molestation and rape, children may perceive their value as centered on being sexual. This idea results in low self-esteem and a poor self-image. The child's entire personality may be wrapped up in the perspective of being valued only for his or her sexuality.

It is hard to convince some abused children that what happened to them was the result of the badness in someone else rather than in them. Such children have difficulty believing that they can be loved just for who they are, rather than for what they can do or how they can please. They struggle to grasp that they are truly forgiven. Survivors of abuse often don't feel lovable. Since they do not love themselves, and often loathe themselves, they cannot conceptualize a God who loves them.

We need to keep reminding the children that God created them beautiful and that God chose them and called them friends. They need to be reminded how precious they are in Jesus' sight and that God knows their hurt. God loves each child no matter what has happened to that child and He can bind every wound.

Thirza Schoots' compassion for abused, abandoned and exploited children has led her to found a street children's ministry in Central Asia.

Caregiver's Time Out



What About Love?

Karin van den Bosch

Karin directs a project for orphaned and abandoned children in East Africa.

Love is something you give. Currently twenty children, ranging in age from six months to fifteen years, share my love which is sometimes stressed and tested to the limit. Interestingly, this love doesn't seem to dry up; the supply flows endlessly. Love that comes from the Lord and what it can do is amazing. Let me share some examples.

What do you do when someone starts crying at your dining room table because she misses her mother so much? Mother has been dead for a few years, but the pain is still in the child's heart and nothing can replace the love for a real mother.

I put my arms around this little girl and just let her cry for a few minutes. I give her my love, although I know it won't be enough. I will always be only a replacement for the losses that have made deep wounds in these lives.

What do you do when you get to care for a new, 11-year-old boy who has come in directly from the streets? What do you do when he runs away after just one day? What do you do when he continues to tell you he will run again and you have to run around town to find him and bring him back? What do you do

when he gets into all sorts of mischief and doesn't seem to listen?

You put your arms around him and give him a hug. You tell him that he is special to you and you care for him. You find him when he runs away. You tell him what is right and wrong and still you show him love, love, love. At first he refuses your hug—he is too big and has been too long without receiving affection. But slowly he softens and grins when you hug him.

My heart cries for this little lost boy who knows only how to misbehave. He is a little lost soul who has lost everything in life—no love left, just fighting to survive on the streets. I pray that our love will make him feel accepted and welcome in my house and that through our love he will accept the love of a Heavenly Father who is waiting to take this lost boy in His arms.

What joy I had today when he asked if he could pray for the food at supper time! Here was this shy and hurting boy praying out boldly, and I was trying hard to swallow away some tears. I was seeing the effects of love. I am now less worried that he will run, because he is showing the beginning of healing.

What do you do when one of the girls decides to run away?

You worry and pray, and you are thankful when you find her. You try to find out why she ran and explain to her that running away doesn't solve a problem. You talk and, in the end, you just take her on your lap and tell her you love her and you worry about her. She gives you a hug and a kiss and the tears start flowing. She admits that she loves you and promises that she will not run away again because of problems with one of the other children. Instead, she will come and tell you the problem. You give her a hug and your heart aches when you look at this little hurting girl who knows only what it is to be on the run from problems.

True, these are not the easiest children to look after, but to see them begin to blossom—even with their ups and downs—makes it worthwhile. To share the love of Christ with them is the most fulfilling thing that I can do. No other love can compare with this love.

When I look at these children, I think about how God must look at us sometimes. As God's children we are often not the easiest to handle, but He never gives up on us and He helps us see things in the right perspective. He is patient and longsuffering and always grants us a new beginning. No matter how much we mess up in our lives, He never stops loving us. It is humbling to think about these parallels and an encouragement to continue to love these children for who they are—precious in God's sight.



Rainbows of Hope (ROH) is a ministry of WEC International.
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